

Message Text

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17
ACTION OES-06

INFO OCT-01 EA-07 ISO-00 ACDA-07 CIAE-00 INR-07 IO-13 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 EB-07 NRC-05 ERDA-05 FEA-01 NEA-10

/077 W

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R 022058Z DEC 76
FM AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON
TO COMTHIRDFLT
INFO SECSTATE WASHDC 2397
NSF REP ANTARCTICA
NSF REP CHRISTCHURCH
COMNAVSUPPFORANTARCTICA
NSF POLAR WASHDC
NAVNUPWRU PORT HUENEME CA
CNO
CINCPAC
CHINFO WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L WELLINGTON 4487

FROM THE AMBASSADOR

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MNUC, NZ
SUBJECT: REMOVAL OF CONTAMINATED SOIL FROM ANTARCTICA

REF: (A) COMTHIRDFLT 190021Z NOV 76
(B) WELLINGTON 3948 DTG 210512Z OCT 76
(C) CNO WASH 111305Z NOV 76
(D) NSF POLAR WASH 042141Z NOV 76
(E) NSF POLAR WASH 232043Z NOV 76
(F) COMNAVSUPPFORANTARCTICA 290221Z NOV 76

1. AS REQUESTED REF A, EMBASSY PROVIDES HERewith FURTHER
AMPLIFICATION OF REF B AND COMMENTS REGARDING REFS C,
D, E, AND F.

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2. IN EMBASSY'S VIEW, A DECISION TO BY-PASS LYTTTELTON

ON NORTH BOUND LEG OF USNS BLAND'S ANTARCTIC VOYAGE MUST
HINGE PRIMARILY ON:

A. TYPE AND DEGREE OF ADVERSE PUBLICITY USG CAN
EXPECT FROM MOVEMENT THROUGH LYTTTELTON OF CONTAMINATED
SOIL, AND

B. A CONCLUSION THAT CONCERN FOR ADVERSE PUBLICITY
OVERRIDES OTHER CONDITIONS OUTLINED REFS C-F. EMBASSY
IS PERSUADED THAT TYPE AND DEGREE OF ADVERSE PUBLICITY
CAN BE MINIMIZED AT A TOLERABLE LEVEL. EMBASSY WOULD NOT
REPEAT NOT, THEREFORE, OBJECT TO LYTTTELTON PORT CALL BY
USNS BLAND.

3. EMBASSY REMAINS CONCERNED, HOWEVER, (SEE REF B)
THAT NO GOOD CAN COME OF SPECIAL ASSISTANCE OR FILM
FOOTAGE OF SOIL REMOVAL FOR NZ TELEVISION. IN THIS
REGARD, WE UNDERSTAND THAT NSF REP IN CHRISTCHURCH HAS
ADVISED NZ TELEVISION OF THE USG'S INABILITY TO PROVIDE
THAT SUPPORT.

4. IN VIEW OF THE HIGH INTEREST (AND OFTEN DISTORTED
COMMENTARY) BY NZ MEDIA FOR THE WELLINGTON AND AUCKLAND
NPW PORT VISITS, AND IN VIEW OF THE OPPOSITION LABOUR
PARTY'S EFFORTS TO MAKE POLITICAL GAIN OF EVERYTHING
NUCLEAR, EMBASSY'S PRIMARY CONCERN IN THIS CASE IS THAT
THE RECENT HARD-FOUGHT GAINS IN U.S.-NEW ZEALAND SECURITY
RELATIONS NOT BE JEOPARDIZED BY A STORM OF BAD PUBLICITY
ABOUT THE PASSAGE THROUGH NEW ZEALAND OF "RADIO ACTIVE
WASE." EMBASSY IS CONFIDENT ADDRESSEES SHARE THIS
CONCERN. WE STRONGLY RECOMMEND, THEREFORE, THAT ALL
PARTIES DEALING WITH NZ MEDIA ON THIS MATTER EMPHASIZE
THE FOLLOWING POSITIVE ASPECTS:

A. THE BLAND IS MAKING A ROUTINE PORT CALL IN LYTTTELTON;

B. THE SOIL IS OF SUCH LOW-GRADE RADIOACTIVITY THAT IT POSES
ABSOLUTELY NO REPEAT NO POTENTIAL HARM AND, INDEED, IS NOT
EVEN CONSIDERED TO BE RADIOACTIVE BY IAEA;

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C. WHILE UNDER NO REPEAT NO LEGAL RESPONSIBILITY TO DO SO,
THE USG HAS GONE TO CONSIDERABLE EXPENSE IN REMOVING THE SOIL
IN ORDER TO STRENGTHEN THE SPIRIT OF THE ANTARCTIC TREADY
AND TO AVOID ANY POSSIBLE QUESTION OF OUR INTENTIONS;

D. THE USG HAS AN INTEREST, SHARED BY THE GNZ, THAT NEW
ZEALAND'S ECONOMY SHARE IN THE BUSINESS GENERATED BY
MAJOR EQUIPMENT OVERHAULS PERFORMED AS PART OF THE

ANTARCTIC PROGRAM THIS POLICY IS TO OUR MUTUAL ADVANTAGE (SEE REF F FOR DETAILS).

5. IN TREATING THIS AS A ROUTINE SHIPMENT AND PORT CALL, EMBASSY FURTHER RECOMMENDS THAT NO REPEAT NO UNUSUAL ASSISTANCE BE EXTENDED FOR NZ MEDIA REQUESTS TO DO SPECIAL STORY ON CONTAMINATED SOIL. ABOVE ALL, WE SHOULD REJECT ANY MEDIA SUGGESTION, OR DENDENCY ON OUR PART, TO MAKE MORE OF THE EVENT THAT THE FACTS THEMSELVES INDICATE.

6. FINALLY, WE HAVE CONSULTED WITH GNZ AND ARE REASSURED BY THEM THAT THEY ARE PREPARED FOR PORT VISIT OF BLAND TO GO AHEAD.
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Message Attributes

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Margaret P. Grafeld
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To: COMTHIRDFLT
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